

General Assembly February 23, 2010 Session

Re: Governor's Bill No. 32, LCO No. 506, Sec.20—an act implementing the Governor's budget recommendations concerning social services

Good morning, Senator Doyle and members of the Human Services committee,

My name is Amelia Saunders. I work for the Mental Health Assoc of CT as the Acting Director of a mental health group home for Deaf adults with mental illness, the only such group home for the deaf in CT. Thank you for allowing me to speak against the Governor's proposed plan to merge the Commission for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired into DSS.

DSS is an enormous agency that able-bodied people have difficulty accessing; it is our experience that the deaf and hard-of-hearing get lost in the shuffle at DSS. Since the recent round of retirements, it is obvious that DSS has been unable to keep up with the work load they have now. Case in point: two clients in our program have been denied medical insurance because DSS cannot keep up with the applications. Another point: two clients are not receiving the benefits they need to pay rent at the group home because their applications have not yet been processed by DSS; we cannot keep our program running without rent. Critical medical care and services are being denied due to an overloaded system. A smaller commission individualized to meet the needs of the deaf is the only way that they will actually have a chance to receive the care to which they are entitled. Care delayed is care denied. The state would be denying services to the deaf if they merged the commission on the deaf into DSS. I would urge this body to reject the governor's budget adjustment, Thank you.